

The Soul selects her own Society; If you were coming in the Fall

by Emily Dickinson

BEFORE YOU READ

LITERARY FOCUS: SLANT RHYME

Not that long ago exact rhyme was part of every poet's craft. An **exact rhyme** occurs when the accented syllables and all following syllables of two or more words share the same sound, such as *love* and *dove* or *number* and *slumber*. Many poets in more recent times, however, have chosen not to use rhyme at all. Some do not like the constraint of a rhyme scheme, and some feel that all the good rhymes have been used already.

Other poets choose to use slant rhyme, also called approximate rhyme. **Slant rhyme** is a close, but not exact, rhyming sound. Examples of slant rhyme are *follow* and *fellow*, and *mystery* and *mastery*. Look for exact rhymes and slant rhymes in the following two poems by Emily Dickinson.

Finding Slant Rhymes Some poets like to have a list of rhymes on hand when they sit down to write a poem. Use the chart below to start your own list. The first row has been done to get you started.

Word	Exact Rhyme	Slant Rhyme
love	dove, glove, above	leave, live, loaf, grove
moon		
fight		
shimmer		

READING SKILLS: ANALYZING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

A major element of Emily Dickinson's poetry is her use of **figures of speech**. In her poems, you'll find **similes**, comparisons of two unlike things using words such as *like*, *as*, *than*, and *resembles*; **metaphors**, comparisons that do not use direct words of comparison; and **personification**, a type of metaphor that gives inanimate things human characteristics. You'll also find **extended metaphors**, metaphors developed over several lines or even over the whole poem. As you read Dickinson's poems, think about what the figures of speech mean and what they help you visualize.

REVIEW SKILLS

As you read "The Soul selects her own Society" and "If you were coming in the Fall," look for the following literary device.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Words or phrases that describe one thing in terms of another, very different thing. Figurative language is not meant to be understood on a literal level.



Reading Standard 3.4
Analyze the ways in which poets use imagery, personification, figures of speech, and sounds to evoke readers' emotions.

Reading Standard 3.7 (Grade 9–10 Review):
Recognize and understand the significance of various literary devices, including figurative language, imagery, allegory, and symbolism, and explain their appeal.

The Soul selects her own Society

Emily Dickinson

IDENTIFY

What does Dickinson **personify** in lines 1–4? Draw a box around the example you find.

ANALYZE

In this poem, Dickinson uses an **extended metaphor**, in which she compares the soul to a queen. How would you explain the chariots at the gate and the kneeling emperor in lines 5–8? (*Grade 9–10 Review*)

IDENTIFY

Every other line in this poem rhymes. Underline the **slant rhymes**, and circle the **exact rhyme**.

FLUENCY

Read the poem aloud until you can read it smoothly. The dashes are an indication to pause, but don't pause too long. Be sure *not* to pause at the end of the only line without a dash at the end.

The Soul selects her own Society—
Then—shuts the Door—
To her divine Majority—
Present no more—

- 5 Unmoved—she notes the Chariots—pausing—
At her low Gate—
Unmoved—an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat—
I've known her—from an ample nation—
10 Choose One—
Then—close the Valves of her attention—
Like Stone—



Emily Dickinson's bedroom window.

If you were coming in the Fall

Emily Dickinson

If you were coming in the Fall,
I'd brush the Summer by
With half a smile, and half a spurn,
As Housewives do, a Fly.

- 5 If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls—
And put them each in separate Drawers,
For fear the numbers fuse—

- If only Centuries, delayed,
10 I'd count them on my Hand,
Subtracting, till my fingers dropped
Into Van Dieman's Land.^o

- If certain, when this life was out—
That your's and mine, should be
15 I'd toss it yonder, like a Rind,
And take Eternity—

- But, now, uncertain of the length
Of this, that is between,
It goads me, like the Goblin Bee—
20 That will not state—it's sting.

^o**Van Dieman's** (dē'mənz) **Land**: former name of Tasmania, an island that is a state of Australia.



INTERPRET

What does the speaker say she'll do with the months (lines 5–8)? Why would she do that? (*Grade 9–10 Review*)

IDENTIFY

In this poem, the second and fourth lines of each stanza rhyme. Circle **exact rhymes**, and underline **slant rhymes**.

INTERPRET

In folklore, a goblin is a tormenting creature. What point is the speaker making by comparing waiting for a bee sting with waiting for her love (lines 17–20)?

EVALUATE

What corrections to lines 14 and 20 would you make if you were editing this poem?

The Soul selects her own Society; If you were coming in the Fall

Reading Skills: Analyzing Figurative Language Sometimes the meaning of figurative language is very clear. When something *stings like a bee*, you know that it hurts. But when it *goads like a Goblin Bee*, you have to infer or interpret the meaning based on the surrounding text and your own prior knowledge.

The chart below lists some figures of speech from Emily Dickinson's poems. In the other columns, identify the two things being compared, and then write what you think each figure of speech means.

Figures of Speech from "The Soul . . ."	Comparison	Meaning
1. "The Soul selects her own Society—" (line 1)		
2. "I've known her—from an ample nation— / Choose One—" (lines 9–10)		
Figures of Speech from "If you were . . ."		
3. "I'd brush the Summer by / . . . / As Housewives do, a Fly." (lines 2 and 4)		
4. "I'd toss [this life] yonder, like a Rind, / And take Eternity—" (lines 15–16)		



Check your Standards Mastery at the back of this book.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Selection: _____ Author: _____

Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of vowel sounds in accented syllables and all succeeding syllables. A **rhyme scheme** is the pattern of end rhymes in a poem, such as *aa bb cc dd* or *abab cdcd*.

DIRECTIONS: Complete the chart with examples from the selection that illustrate each type of rhyme. Then, use letters for each end rhyme to show the rhyme scheme. (Not all selections will contain each type of rhyme.)

<p>Exact Rhyme—words whose syllables share identical sounds.</p>	<p>Slant or Approximate Rhyme—words whose syllables share close but not identical sounds.</p>
<p>End Rhyme—rhymes that occur at the end of lines.</p>	<p>Internal Rhyme—rhymes that occur within lines.</p>

Rhyme Scheme: _____